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**A COMPARISON OF TEACHER AND PUBLIC OPINIONS RELATING
TO TEACHERS ACTIVITIES IN A SCHOOL TAX REFERENDUM**

(TITLE)

BY

JOHN E. GIFFORD

PLAN B PAPER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
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1965

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS PLAN B PAPER BE ACCEPTED AS
FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE DEGREE M.S. IN ED.

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There has been an alarmingly steady rise in the defeat of school tax referendums. The failure of these tax referendums will affect the life of each student, teacher, and the future of America. As professional people teachers should make an effort to find out why these referendums failed and develop a criteria so teachers could carry on some activities, in support of the tax referendum that would be acceptable by most people in the community.

The problem is a comparison of teacher and public opinions related to teachers activities in a tax referendum.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

It is the purpose of this study to determine the opinion of teachers and public as to the appropriate activities of teachers in a tax referendum.

METHOD OF TREATMENT

A questionnaire was prepared consisting of activities that teachers might carry on before and during a tax referendum.

Three hundred fifty questionnaires were given out to teachers and three hundred fifty questionnaires were given out to parents in Flat Rock, Robinson, Marshall, and Paris, Illinois.

The questionnaires from the teachers and public were kept separate as they were collected and were coded separately. They were coded by the number of teachers and parents who strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed on each of the fifteen questions.

The percentages were figured for the teachers by taking two hundred forty into the number of votes cast in each of the five columns for each of the fifteen questions.

The percentages for the parents were figured by taking one hundred eighteen into the number of votes cast in each of the five columns for each of the fifteen questions.

A Chi-square test was run in testing whether the two groups differ significantly with respect to the appropriate activities of teachers in a tax referendum.

RELATED LITERATURE

Children from the baby boom that followed the end of World War II began crowding our schools ten years ago. The results is a great American headache, felt in almost every community across the nation. Taxpayers want children to have a proper education but do not want taxes to rise.

Young parents face the worst dilemma. It is their children who need good schools, but theirs are also the families that can least afford heavier taxes. Out of relatively modest incomes they must pay the many costs of establishing new homes.

Most young parents understand the vital role of good schooling and support tax referendums for the schools. But some are swayed by groups that almost always oppose new schools. Known in most communities, this opposition draws support from elderly people on fixed incomes, childless couples, parents whose children have finished school, those with children in nonpublic schools, and large property owners whose tax bill would rise sharply.

The arguments of these hard-core anti-schoolers do not vary much from town to town. They contend that old schools can be "fixed up" or added to endlessly or can be used more efficiently; that new schools are full of expensive frills or particularly that tax increases will be crushing. And many school expansion

programs fail because of the tax problem. There are so many taxes these days about which people have nothing to say, that some take it out on the one they can vote on, the school tax. The resentment is misplaced, but it's there.¹

In short, school bond issues are in trouble and face more. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find any educational authority who believes that we Americans really intend to sell schooling short. Dr. Nicholas Engelhardt, a leading school consultant, thinks that the blame for many defeats lies with school boards themselves, because they fail to make their problems understood.² Educators have to explain exactly what people are being asked to pay for. When voters get facts, they invariably support good education. But they must be reached. It is now evident that school boards require help in reaching their communities. It is also becoming clear that when parents and teachers provide this help they can be decisive factors in winning school campaigns.

¹ Mehling, Harold, "How to Win the Fight for a New School," Redbook, January, 1964.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER 11

THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY

Should teachers take an active part in school-bond and tax election campaigns? The answer to the question is an emphatic "yes."³ Not only do teachers have the right to express themselves both individually and in chorus on matters affecting the education of children, but it is their duty to do so.

Counsel only from the school board and administration is not enough to alert the public to the need for building funds or more operational revenue. In these days of rising taxes for all purposes, of inflation, and on increasingly intense competition for division of the tax dollar, the need of schools must be proclaimed to the public through the most effective means of communication at hand. As far as parents are concerned, no channel can match teacher-parent relationship.⁴

This relationship, direct, personal, intimate, is far more compelling than cold statistical references. It is focused solely

³ Kingley, Harold W. "How to Campaign Effectively," National Education Association Journal, February, 1960.

⁴ Ibid.

upon the welfare of one tousel-headed or pony-tailed little wriggler, whose tussle with syntax, sixes and sevens is of mutual concern to teachers and parents.

Moreover, who are better qualified than teachers to alert the public, especially the parents, to the educational ill effects of crowded classrooms, swing-shift sessions, poor lighting and inadequate teaching aids?

Obviously, activity of teachers in getting the words to the public should be conducted with the scope and intensity most nearly conforming to the attitudes and temper of the community. But in those districts where fear of criticism or reprisal prevents teachers from giving educational advice during school revenue campaigns, there should be the inauguration of a plan of action which will gain for teachers the right and privileges enjoyed by other citizens.

Teachers participation must be dignified and professional; their theme confined to the educational needs and welfare of boys and girls. Their activity must be co-ordinated with the strategy and plan of the whole campaign and, except in rare instances, in co-operation with the administration and school board.

Teaching is a profession, but it has not reached the plateau that it is entitled. The attitudes and role of teachers have changed.

Teachers for their part, have a growing confidence in themselves as members of a great profession. They are ready to exercise both their right and their responsibilities that they should enjoy in a democracy.

5

The heart of an educational institution is its faculty. They alone can determine its quality. One responsibility of any faculty is to keep abreast of new knowledge. In many fields, especially in the natural and social sciences, students must learn terms and language that were unknown when their parents were in school.

We are living in a nation where education doubles every ten years. People see other changes but feel that the school never changes or has changed very little since they attended it.

Every child has a right to a well-rounded, balanced education that will enable him to become a responsible, productive citizen and to lead a satisfying personal life. Education is the most productive investment any society can make.

The ability of college students to progress towards independent and self-motivated thinking depends in large part on their preparation.

⁵Frey, J. M., president, Abilene, Kansas, City Teachers Association, National Education Association, March 1960.

Today's colleges are often forced to spend an inordinate amount of energy to develop skills which should have been developed earlier. Even when related to the home background of some pupils, these problems can often be traced to overcrowding in elementary and high schools, and hence to the failure of society to give schools the support to do their job properly.

Our system of ideas and practices in financing and supporting education was generated out of the conditions and views of past centuries and that no longer is it applicable to present conditions, but is actually detrimental to progress. These ideas are already so thoroughly realized that they no longer are productive and we can not go ahead unless we change them.

Who are better qualified than the teachers to alert the public as to the needs of the schools? We all know the problem but do not want to face it as a group. We know that education holds the only real solution to our continued survival. Not only will education protect us from external forces, but it offers the only real hope of elimination of internal corruption, racial injustice, and moral decay caused by ignorance. Education makes it possible to produce well

adjusted individuals who are competent, free from fear and willing to face the future.

There are four facts of our twentieth century life; a rapidly changing society, and mounting store of knowledge, and new understandings about people and learning, and a raise in taxes.⁶ There is no shortage of ideas about what these problems are and how they should be solved. There is a constant babble of voices as millions of people with many and often conflicting ideas speak out about school problems. All these voices have a right to be heard. But one voice that should speak out clearly indeed is the voice of the teaching profession. This professional freedom is not an automatic achievement. It exists only for the individuals who, by their own efforts, make it real.

There is not much need to talk about a better curriculum or working conditions or a new school if teachers cannot play a full role in telling the public the school problem.

There are those outside the profession and even a few within, who fear and dislike the strengthening of the profession. Their fear will be done away with as the teachers demonstrate

⁶Frey, lec. cit.

their determination to use their power responsibly. Their dislike will disappear as they understand that a strong profession results in better education for the children of the community, and of the nation, and a proper place in the nation's society for its teachers.

DATA

QUESTIONS		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	X ²
In American history the topic of school taxation should be taught.		90	119	16	13	2	18.21*
	T.R.	37.5%	49.6%	6.7%	5.4%	.83%	
		27	64	22	3	2	
	P.R.	22.9%	54.2%	18.6%	2.6%	1.7%	
Pupils should not be used as campaigners.		68	90	30	39	13	21.70*
	T.R.	28.3%	37.5%	12.5%	16.25%	5.4%	
		32	55	0	17	14	
	P.R.	27.1%	45.8%	0%	14.4%	11.9%	
Teachers should tell parents about conditions in the school which need attention.		70	100	27	28	15	15.71*
	T.R.	29.2%	41.7%	11.3%	11.7%	6.3%	
		35	69	4	8	2	
	P.R.	29.7%	58.5%	3.4%	6.8%	1.7%	
Teachers should be a part of the citizens committee for the school.		63	112	27	35	3	9.59*
	T.R.	26.3%	46.7%	11.3%	14.6%	1.3%	
		23	63	21	8	3	
	P.R.	19.5%	53.4%	17.8%	6.8%	2.6%	
Teachers should contact parents with verbal face to face appeal for the bond issue.		18	59	53	78	32	2.17
	T.R.	7.5%	24.6%	22.1%	32.5%	13.3%	
		6	34	21	39	18	
	P.R.	5.1%	28.8%	17.8%	33.1%	15.3%	

T.R. Teachers Reporting 240

P.R. Parents Reporting 118

Four Degrees of freedom X² at .05 equals 9.49

* Means these are significant

DATA

QUESTIONS		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	χ^2
Selected teachers should meet personally with community civic leaders on behalf of the campaign.		42	129	38	24	7	16.61*
	T.R.	17.5%	53.8%	15.8%	10.0%	2.9%	
	P.R.	13	57	20	12	16	
	P.R.	11.0%	48.3%	17.0%	10.2%	13.6%	
Teachers should send post cards to citizens asking them to vote for the bond issue.		7	23	45	111	54	3.55
	T.R.	2.9%	9.6%	18.8%	46.3%	22.5%	
	P.R.	4	6	17	58	33	
	P.R.	3.4%	5.1%	14.4%	49.2%	28%	
Teachers should telephone parents of students in school asking them to support the bond issue.		10	28	37	114	51	9.32
	T.R.	4.16%	11.7%	15.4%	47.5%	21.3%	
	P.R.	4	7	16	75	16	
	P.R.	3.4%	5.9%	13.6%	63.6%	13.6%	
Teachers should provide transportation for voters known to be favorable to the bond issue.		8	27	40	108	57	15.07*
	T.R.	3.3%	11.3%	16.7%	45.0%	23.8%	
	P.R.	4	7	6	73	28	
	P.R.	3.4%	5.9%	5.1%	61.8%	23.7%	
Teachers should provide baby sitting for voters known to be favorable to the bond issue.		3	16	28	119	74	13.18*
	T.R.	1.3%	6.7%	11.7%	49.6%	30.8%	
	P.R.	0	2	9	80	27	
	P.R.	0%	1.7%	7.6%	67.8%	22.9%	

T.R. Teachers Reporting 240

P.R. Parents Reporting 118

Four Degrees of freedom χ^2 at .05 equals 9.49

* Means these are significant

DATA

QUESTIONS		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	χ^2
Teachers should distribute school bond literature on his free time.		5	33	53	99	50	4.52
	T.R.	2.1%	13.8%	22.1%	41.3%	20.8%	
	P.R.	0	17	27	56	18	
Teachers well schooled on the bond issue should appear on radio and television and explain the bond issue.		24	124	36	39	17	7.19
	T.R.	10.0%	51.7%	15%	16.3%	7.1%	
	P.R.	6	63	24	12	13	
Teachers should give money to finance the campaign.		6	29	49	95	61	9.27
	T.R.	2.5%	12.1%	20.4%	39.6%	25.4%	
	P.R.	0	7	18	55	38	
Teachers should serve as inter- viewers and find those people who are favorable to the bond issue.		9	26	41	123	41	9.61*
	T.R.	3.8%	10.8%	17.1%	51.3%	17.1%	
	P.R.	0	13	28	49	28	
Teachers should form a local teachers assoc- iation in favor of the bond issue.		20	48	70	73	29	4.39
	T.R.	8.3%	20.0%	29.2%	30.4%	12.1%	
	P.R.	4	23	33	38	20	

T.R. Teachers Reporting 240

P.R. Parents Reporting 118

Four Degrees of freedom χ^2 at .05 equals 9.49

* Means these are significant

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Question One: In American History the topic of school taxation should be taught. Teachers and parents indicate significant differences in their answers to this question. Taxation is something we will always have, so parents probably feel it would be a waste of educational time to teach a topic on school taxation and the teaching time could be used for something that is more benefitting to the students.

Question Two: Pupils should not be used as campaigners. The opinion of teachers and parents indicate significant difference to this question. Parents seem to feel this is an activity that students need not participate. There would probably be no educational gains for the students from this type activity. Parents may not want pressure put on them by their own children and other children of the community. Parents possibly feel if they are given the facts they are capable of making up their own minds as to what is good for the students and the community.

Question Three: Teachers should tell parents about conditions in the school which need attention. Teachers and parents opinions disagree. This could indicate that parents

want to know what is going on in the school for they agree more strongly than teachers. Since parents seem to want teachers to tell about conditions in the school this could possibly indicate that information about the school is not reaching the parents or it may be the wrong type of information.

Question Four: Teachers should be a part of the citizens committee for the school. There is significant difference in the opinion of teachers and parents to this question. Maybe selected teachers or volunteer teachers should be part of the citizens committee. Or possibly this type activity should be hands off for the teachers.

Question Five: Teachers should contact parents with verbal face to face appeal for the bond issue.

Question Seven: Teachers should send post cards to citizens asking them to vote for the bond issue.

Question Eight: Teachers should telephone parents of students in school asking them to support the bond issue. Teachers and parents have the same opinions and disagree to question five, seven and eight. The activities in these three questions seem to down grade the teaching profession. They seem to cast doubt upon the ability

of parents to make up their own mind about the bond issue.

Question Six: Selected teachers should meet personally with community civic leaders on behalf of the campaign. The opinions of teachers and parents are not homogenous in this question. Parents disagree more strongly and are more undecided than teachers. Parents may look at civic leaders differently than a citizens committee. Maybe civic leaders would be more of a political atmosphere than a citizens committee. Possibly parents may think teachers should stay out altogether.

Question Nine: Teachers should provide transportation for voters known to be favorable to the bond issue.

Question Ten: Teachers should provide baby sitting for voters known to be favorable to the bond issue. To questions nine and ten, teachers and parents indicate significant differences in their answers to these questions. Parents seem to feel they can provide their own transportation and take care of their children at tax referendum time. Parents probably do not want their views about the bond issue to be labeled as favorable.

Question Eleven: Teachers should distribute school bond literature on his free time. Teachers and parents have the same opinions and disagree to the question. It is possible that teachers and parents feel that teachers handing out school bond literature is down grading the teaching profession or that teachers could possibly make better use of his free time.

Question Twelve: Teachers well schooled on the bond issue should appear on radio and television and explain the bond issue. Presenting the bond issue on radio and television parents possibly feel they are given the facts and to support or not to support the bond issue will be their own free choice. Teachers agree to this activity probably because only a few teachers would be involved and this activity could be more respectable to both teachers and parents.

Question Thirteen: Teachers should give money to finance the campaign. Possibly the financing of the campaign should be done by the citizens committee, school board or a project for those in the community who wish to do so.

Question Fourteen: Teachers should serve as interviewers and find those people who are favorable to the bond issue.

The opinions of teachers and parents are different to this question. It is possible that hands should be kept off an activity of this type.

Question Fifteen: Teachers should form a local teachers association in favor of the bond issue. Teachers and parents agree that they disagree to this activity. It could be possible that teachers may not be in favor of the bond issue that is presented. Teachers may not want to put all their eggs in one basket. Since parents disagree more strongly than teachers it is probable that an activity of this type could bring about disunity between teachers and community.

COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS

Question two, pupils should not be used as campaigners.

Comment from a woman teacher, age twenty-three and one year teaching experience. "It depends on where the students campaign. I tend to agree because this should stimulate civic interest and pride, but I have some reservations."

Question three, teachers should tell parents about conditions in the school which need attention. Comment from a woman teacher, age forty-seven and seventeen years teaching experience. "It does get results. But telling parents about conditions should come from the board of education. A teacher is a person and a citizen first, then a teacher. He should be allowed to choose but not expected to do certain things." Other comments on question three were, "with discretion, at times, and if asked."

Question seven, teachers should send post cards to citizens asking them to vote for the bond issue. Comments were, "ineffective," "telephoning is better than sending post cards."

Question twelve, teachers well schooled on the bond issue should appear on radio and television and explain the bond issue. Comment was, "a teacher being on the citizens committee is more effective than being on television."

Question fifteen, teachers should form a local teachers

association in favor of the bond issue. Comment was, "if they are in favor of it."

Comment from a man teacher age twenty-seven and six years teaching experience. "As both a teacher and a parent perhaps I could agree with some of the things I now disagree." He disagreed with questions two, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen.

Comment from a woman teacher age fifty-three. "I assume you want to know how I feel about teachers acting in the capacity of teachers? Teachers speaking as citizens, taxpayers, and parents should play any role in such a campaign as they wish."

Comment from a woman teacher age fifty-four. "I marked these undecided. I waver between decisions, but I believe I have a tendency to strongly disagree on all issues. I could have marked some agree with provisions and modifications. This is a personal matter and some teachers get it in the neck enough without asking for it. Therefore, I believe these issues should be left on a voluntary basis for participation. If the measures are adopted. There are strong "pros" and "cons" on all issues involved here."

COMMENTS FROM PARENTS

"Teachers should go talk to parents, not telephone them."

"I feel a bond issue is a job for the school board and and school administrators." "Teachers need to spend more time with the students."

CHAPTER 111

CONCLUSIONS

There is a difference in this study, regarding the opinion of teachers and parents in questions one, two, three, six, nine, and ten relating to teachers activities in a school tax referendum. The null hypothesis can be rejected and concluded that it does matter whether you are a teacher or a parent as to the opinion of teachers and parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As long as schools are supported by the property tax the public must and will have a say about the school. The only way the school and children can come out ahead is for the school administrators and the public to work together and solve most of their problems.

The activities that teachers and parents show agreement should be capitalized on at tax referendum time and the activities they disagree on should not be used.

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